

Accessibility and Open Access

Hans Zappe
Editor-in-Chief



When the principles of open access began to be applied to scientific publishing, about 25 years ago, the goal was a noble one: documentation of the world's scientific progress should be made available to everyone, equitably, and at no cost to the reader. While respecting and honoring the role that publishers play in disseminating scientific knowledge, the open access concept insisted that publicly funded research should be made publicly accessible, and not hidden behind subscription fees that not all institutions or individuals can afford.

Since then, open access has expanded by leaps and bounds, such that, at least in Europe and North America, most research funders' guidelines insist that the work that they pay for be published with open access. Reflecting the diversity of funding mandates and publishers' needs, a variety of color-coded open access (OA) models developed: in Gold OA, the author pays article processing charges (APCs), which cover the cost of publication, but the article is free to read for everyone. Green OA has no APCs, but allows authors to post the accepted version of their paper on their own websites, while the journals in which the papers appear still require a subscription. Diamond OA has neither APCs nor subscription fees, and the costs are borne entirely by the publisher or a sponsor.

Finally, there is the hybrid OA approach, in which authors can voluntarily pay APCs to make their work freely available, but also have the option to publish without any fees, implying that the paper requires a subscription or payment to read it. In a hybrid OA journal, therefore, some papers are freely accessible and some are behind a paywall: the author decides.

When the *Journal of Optical Microsystems* was launched four years ago, we decided to make it Gold Open Access, one of the few in the SPIE portfolio, since we believed that cutting-edge optical microsystems research should be made freely available to everyone. While we still believe that, we have also come to realize that this publication model implicitly excludes large portions of the research community. Not all researchers worldwide can reserve significant parts of their research budget to pay for APCs, even if the SPIE fees are amongst the lowest in the business. In the past few years, many JOM editors have spoken with potential authors who would love to send their work to JOM, but simply can't afford it.

To make JOM a journal accessible to everyone working in the optical microsystems field, we have thus decided to shift from Gold Open Access to hybrid open access, starting in 2025. Authors will now have a choice: publish for free under access control, or pay the APC, in which case the article is Gold Open Access and free to read for everyone. All previously published work in JOM will remain fully open access; nothing will change for those papers.

We hope this change will make JOM even more attractive for wider swaths of the optics and microsystems communities. Our aim is to interconnect as many researchers in our fields as possible, regardless of their research budgets, and we are confident that this new publication model will help JOM achieve that goal.